



Planning & Development Services
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**RDS Committee
Community Meetings
Public Input Summary**

July 13, 2011 Meeting

(The main bullet represents a citizen comment, followed by answers from staff or an RDS Committee member under indented bullets)

- With tighter residential design standards (RDS), would we still need the demolition review process?
 - The demolition review process allows for the consideration of whether a structure proposed for demolition has some significance to potentially allow for a “cooling off period” (up to 180-day delay to consider alternatives), in addition to reviewing compatibility beyond the basic code limitations. This is a separate chapter from the Code of Ordinances, which will be evaluated for revisions in the future.
- What do Cottage District residents think of the proposed revisions?
- Articulation: for projections, such as bay windows, does the house have to step back or can they encroach into the setback?
 - They can encroach up to 4’ from the side property line.
- Some concern was expressed about pervious paving.
- How about allowing garages in the front?
- How would it impact the neighborhood character?
- It doesn’t seem logical to require long driveways.
- Demolished houses tend to be smaller than their replacements?
 - The proposed RDS are encouraging the use of alleys and shorter driveways through smaller rear setback requirements.
 - The charge given by the RDS Committee is to “tweak and balance” the code.
- This could put a premium on garages facing alleys.
- One citizen would like to see data about existing FAR’s (Floor-to-Area Ratio) in the SF-A and SF-B (Cottage District) districts.
- What about allowing less FAR for smaller lots?
- Terrell Hills’ FAR is .38.
- However, they also have much larger lots there.
- People need to know that “just because something might have been built before, it doesn’t mean that you can do it now.” Codes change.
- Do breezeways count as FAR?
 - No, they do not. Only fully enclosed structures count towards FAR, including garages.

July 14, 2011 Meeting

- Has the Committee calculated the loss of square footage from the proposed FAR reduction?
 - Yes, analysis has been done to consider what lowering an FAR from .53 to .45 would mean for the market. Analysis of new projects since 2007 has shown that the vast majority of projects represent less than a .45 FAR.
- By incentivizing the preservation of 50% or more of the structure, are we inadvertently encouraging encapsulation?
 - This could be the case; however, our current definition of demolition prohibits encapsulation, which is currently and will continue to be checked at the framing stage of inspections.
- Since roof overhangs can encroach up to 4 feet into a setback, does that mean that they could be as little as 1 foot from a neighbor's fence?
 - Not for main structures, since the proposed RDS includes a separate setback for projections and roof overhangs (4 feet). The RDS Committee will consider a similar concept for accessory structures.
- Years ago the code permitted 47 feet tall houses.
- A reference was made to a recent project approved at 514 Argo, which the current RDS for height limited ability to provide a clean roofline and a desirable design (according to the builder).
- From a realtor's perspective, there is concern about the potential loss of height and square footage.
- The proposed RDS would result in increased prices per square foot, according to a participating realtor.
- It is much more difficult to get speculative home loans now and to fold renovation costs into a mortgage.
- What are the unintended consequences of lowering FAR?
- Why can't SF-B include a menu or catalog of architectural styles to choose from, including bungalows?
- There was concern that some traditional styles cannot and still will not be able to be built according to the RDS.
- SF-B example: 514 Argo was (and still is...) restricted to a max height of 24 feet for the 1st 15 feet of the house and 28 feet to the top of the ridge.
 - The builder has agreed to allow the Committee to use the plans for this project as a test case to evaluate whether the proposed RDS would allow for this project as it was originally designed.
- If the main concern is protecting SF-B, could that be done through a historic district?
 - Historic district designation would require the development of an enabling ordinance as the first step to allow for the creation of a district as a zoning overlay, as well as specific design guidelines.
- We need to be careful about what we allow for pervious paving, since most of them lose their effectiveness if not properly maintained.
- There was concern expressed about the potential loss of attic space due to height restrictions.
- Due to an aging population, demand for single-story structures is likely to increase.
- Real estate demand in Alamo Heights is "exorbitant."

Note: The RDS Committee will take all of the comments under consideration to evaluate if any additional changes should be made.